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PLEASE PASS THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM MR CARVER D/DCI/NIO  
TO MR B. E. LAYTON A/NIO/SSEA  
O 262130Z MAR 75 ZYH

FM SSO ALCOM

TO YEKHEDC/SSO ACSI DA WASH

FOR: MR. B. E. LAYTON, A/NIO/SSEA, FROM MR. CARVER, D/DCI/NIO.

1. I HAVE READ THE DRAFT OF THE VIETNAM APPRAISAL ON THE PLANE AND  
OFFER THE COMMENTS BELOW FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. THESE ARE NOT  
KEYED TO PRECISE TEXT (WHICH WILL HAVE BEEN REVISED DURING THE  
26 MARCH COORDINATION SESSION ANYWAY). INSTEAD, THEY RELATE TO  
TONE AND OVERALL IMPRESSION.

2. I AM NOT WELL VERSED IN THE FACTUAL DETAILS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAM  
SITUATION, BUT, TO BE BLUNT AT THE RISK OF BEING RUDE, I AM NOT  
MUCH BETTER VERSED AFTER READING THE 25 MARCH DRAFT. IT IS LIGHT  
ON FACTUAL DETAIL AND HEAVY ON RHETORIC WHICH STRIKES THE EYE OF  
A COLD READER (PERHAPS UNFAIRLY) AS HIGHLY EMOTIONAL. INDEED,  
MY CHIEF PROBLEMS WITH IT RELATE TO THE FACT THAT ITS LANGUAGE  
IS, BY AND LARGE, (A) PERPLEXINGLY, EVEN IRRITATINGLY, VAGUE  
AND, AT THE SAME TIME, (B) STRIDENTLY SHRILL--OR AT LEAST THAT  
IS HOW IT CAME ACROSS TO ME.

3. ON THE TONE, THE DRAFT IS SPRINKLED--LOADED--WITH COLOR WORDS  
AND PHRASES: "DESPERATE", "BLEAK", "COLLAPSE", "MOST SERIOUS COMMAND  
MISCALUATIONS IN THE VIETNAMESE WAR", ETC., ETC. SUCH TERMS TO BE  
FRANK, TELL A READER CONSIDERABLY MORE ABOUT THE DRAFTER'S MOOD  
THAN THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

4. ON VAGUENESS, LOOK AT PHRASES SUCH AS THESE REPRESENTATIVE  
EXAMPLES: "THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE LOST THE 23RD DIVISION AND TWO  
RANGER GROUPS" (P. 3)--ALL OF THEM? "LARGE NUMBERS OF REPLACE-  
MENTS", "LARGE NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCE", "FEW TROOPS GUARDING THE  
CITY", "SEVERAL WEEKS" (ALL FROM P. 4), "SEVERAL COMMUNIST  
DIVISIONS AND INDEPENDENT REGIMENTS", "SOME TROOPS FROM THE  
TAY NINH FRONT" (P. 5), ETC. THE READER GETS NO CLUE REGARDING  
THE DRAFTER'S DEFINITION OF "LARGE NUMBER", OR HOW MANY IS  
"SEVERAL", "FEW", OR "SOME."

5 THE SECTION ENTITLED "THIEU GOVERNMENT DISCREDITED" (BEGINNING  
ON PAGE 10) IS PERHAPS THE BEST REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE OF MY  
PROBLEM. THE HEADING IS A REAL GRABBER. ON TURNING THE PAGE,

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HOWEVER, THE REAPER'S FLAT ASSERTION THAT "THE PRESIDENT IS UNDOUBTEDLY WIDELY DIS-CREDITED . . ." WORDS SUCH AS "UNDOUBTEDLY" MAKE ME EDGY, PARTICULARLY IN AN INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE. THIS SECTION STARTS WITH A VERGILIAN STROPHE: "AS THE COMMUNISTS TAKE OVER MAJOR CITY AFTER MAJOR CITY AND PROVINCE AFTER PROVINCE . . ." THE RHETORIC RINGS WITH A ROLLING KNELL OF DOOM, BUT ISN'T ITS FACTUAL BASIS A TRIFLE SHAKY? TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, THE ONLY MAJOR CITY THE COMMUNISTS HAVE TAKEN (TO DATE) IS HUE.

6. I AM NOT FOR A MOMENT ARGUING THAT THE DRAFT APPRECIATION'S JUDGMENTS ABOUT THE FUTURE ARE WRONG. THEY MAY INDEED BE EXACTLY RIGHT. THE TROUBLE IS, HOWEVER, THAT FOR THE REASONS NOTED ABOVE THE JUDGMENTS ARE SIMPLY NOT PERSUASIVE AS STATED AND SUPPORTED IN THE DRAFT.

7. IN A CONFUSED PERIOD OF HEAVY MILITARY ACTION WHOSE OUTCOME PROBABLY WILL SET THE COURSE OF EVENTS FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, THE TWO THINGS ESTIMATES MOST NEED ARE TWO OF THE HARDEST TO ACHIEVE OR SUSTAIN: PROPORTION AND PERSPECTIVE. WE WOULD BE DERELICT IN OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IF WE WERE TO OSTRICH IN THE FACE OF IMPENDING DISASTER, BUT IT IS EQUALLY UNPROFESSIONAL TO PLAY CHICKEN LITTLE. WHERE THE FACTS ARE BLEAK, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO STATE THEM CANDIDLY; BUT WE HAVE AN EQUAL OBLIGATION TO BE CANDID ABOUT THE UNCERTAIN NATURE OF OUR EVIDENCE (WHEN IT IS UNCERTAIN) AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH OUR CONCLUSIONS ARE BASED ON INFERENCES DERIVED FROM WHAT WE THINK (PERHAPS CORRECTLY) MUST BE HAPPENING AS OPPOSED TO WHAT WE ACTUALLY KNOW IS HAPPENING.

8. I HOPE THE 26 MARCH COORDINATION SESSION TAKES CARE OF SOME OF THE POINTS NOTED ABOVE. I AM CONCERNED THAT THE PRESENT (25 MARCH) TYPE OF LANGUAGE WOULD ENTAIL THE RISK OF MISLEADING OUR POLICY-LEVEL CONSUMERS IF THE SKY IS NOT (YET) FALLING, OR DILUTE OUR WARNING BY DAMAGING OUR CREDIBILITY IF IT IS.

9. NEW SUBJECT. WHILE ON THIS MISSION I WOULD APPRECIATE BEING KEPT ADVISED OF ANY MAJOR NEW INTELLIGENCE, PARTICULARLY NORTH VIETNAMESE, SOVIET, OR CHINESE DEVELOPMENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE 25 MARCH DRAFT (P. 2) SPEAKS OF ONE OF HANOI'S FIVE REMAINING RESERVE DIVISIONS (320B) MOVING SOUTH. PARA 6 OF TDFIRDB-315/03582-75 SAYS "A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE SEVEN STRATEGIC RESERVE DIVISIONS IN NORTH VIETNAM HAVE BEEN COMMITTED TO THE SOUTH". ARE THESE TWO STATEMENTS CONSISTENT OR NOT? PLEASE LET ME KNOW YOUR VIEWS ON STATUS OF STRATEGIC RESERVE UNIT MOVEMENTS FROM NORTH VIETNAM SINCE 1 JANUARY AND PLEASE APPRISE ME OF ANY CHANGES.

MANY THANKS.

XGDS-2

SSO NOTE: DELIVER AT OPENING OF BUSINESS 27 MAR 75  
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